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OPINIO

Consider postal reform

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The U.S. Postal Service seems to be continually awash in red ink. No matter how much money the government gives it, it always needs more, as the latest first-class postage rate hike to 37 cents (effective June 30) demonstrates.

Now Postmaster General John Potter has presented Congress with a transformation plan that would, he believes, allow the Postal Service to operate more like a business and to become more efficient. If Congress approves, this plan would replace the 32-year-old Postal Reorganization Act that has been the service's marching orders.

It is true, as postal officials say, that no organization should continue to operate with a business plan that was put in place in 1970. Back then, no one had thought of using computers to communicate and pay bills. But lawmakers need to proceed slowly and carefully on this one.

The Postal Service exists because the Constitution gives Congress the power to create it. The founders had good reasons for doing so. Then, as today, the nation needed a reliable way to communicate and to transfer payments. The Postal Service provides first-class mail delivery to locations near most residents in the United States (some rural residents have to rely on post boxes, rather than home delivery).

But when the Postal Service ventures beyond first-class mail delivery, it comes into competition with a host of private parcel-delivery companies. Government always should tread

lightly when it comes to direct competition with the private sector.

United Parcel Service and Federal Express, for example, are quick to note that the Postal Service enjoys several competitive advantages when it comes to delivering packages. Its trucks are exempt from taxes of all sorts, and they can park anywhere without getting a ticket. The law mandates that any company providing two-day urgent delivery has to charge twice what the Postal Service charges for the same thing.

Part of the proposal before Congress would allow the Postal Service to offer special prices to large companies that mail huge volumes and higher prices to small businesses that use the service less. This market-based pricing system would be a further threat to private delivery companies.

The parcel delivery industry, like any other industry, would benefit from an increase in level competition, not a decrease.

Despite rate increases amounting to several billions of dollars in recent years, the Postal Service still lost \$1.6 billion last year. Granted, the anthrax threat accounted for about \$300 million of that. However, the decision to begin selling merchandise and to sponsor Tour de France champion Lance Armstrong in recent years raises questions about the service's priorities.

All of these things should be considered carefully as Congress rewrites the law and examines the purpose of this evolving institution.



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sponsor speakers.

More good news is that David Horowitz's Center for the Study of Popular Culture has launched a "Campaign for Fairness and Inclusion in Higher Education." It calls for university officials to:

1. Establish a zero-tolerance policy for vandalizing newspapers or heckling speakers.
2. Conduct an inquiry into political bias in the allocation of student program funds, including speakers' fees, and seek ways to promote underrepresented perspectives.
3. Conduct an inquiry into political bias in the hiring process of faculty and administrators and seek ways to promote fairness toward — and inclusion of — underrepresented perspectives.

Were even one high-profile institution like the University of Colorado to adopt a firm policy of intellectual inclusiveness, that practice would quickly spread, and benighted students everywhere would soon see daylight.

Christina Hoff Sommers is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. Her most recent book is "The War Against Boys: How Misguided Feminism Is Harming Our Young Men."

Beware of Eagle Forum

Just a very brief comment: I find the Eagle Forum to be one of the most dangerous organizations in Utah. Its "family based" values are I think, in reality, a "total control" based system, very akin to the early New England Puritans and reminiscent of some Eastern European historical happenings. Heaven protect us when "good people" continue to do nothing.

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